

was limited to those owning¹ twenty-five acres of land with a house thereon, or one hundred acres without a house. In an incorporated city a man could not vote unless he was the owner of land within the city limits. Harsh naturalization laws discouraged immigration. The law of entail and primogeniture flourished as in England.

Jefferson's first attack tip on the old order of things was directed against a class to which he himself belonged—the aristocracy. Much of the best land of Virginia descended from oldest son to oldest son by way of entail. Such land was not liable for debt, could not be bequeathed by will, could not be alienated even with the consent of the owner without special act of the legislature. Such a system of land tenure was opposed to one of Jefferson's pet theories—to* wit, that one generation has no right to bind succeeding generations; that the usufruct of the earth belongs to the living, not to the dead. Entails, he said, were "contrary to good policy, tended to deceive honest traders who g'ave credit on. the visible possession of such estates., discouraged the holder from improving his land, and sometimes did injury to the morals of youth by rendering them independent of and disobedient to their parents." "To annul this privilege, and, instead of an aristocracy of wealth, of more harm and danger than, benefit to society, to make an opening for the aristocracy of virtue and talent," Jefferson introduced his bill for the abolition of entails. It met, of course, with the fiercest resistance. Strenuous efforts were made to amend the bill in such a way as to> break its force. But Jefferson stood firm, and the bill passed substantially in the form in which he desired. Tenure by fee tail was abolished; lands and slaves could no> longer be prevented by law from falling into the hands of their rightful owners. There was now but one prop for the landed aristocracy. That was the principle of primogeniture, and through the efforts of Jefferson that, too, was soon removed. The blow dealt by these reforms fell heavily on the old families and the recoil upon Jefferson was severe. The great land holders of the State were henceforth his bitter